

Written Ministerial Statement

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Regional Development

A6 LONDONDERRY TO DUNGIVEN DUALLING — PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF INTENTION TO PROCEED AND MAKING OF THE DIRECTION ORDER

Published at 11.15 am on Wednesday 24 February 2016

Miss M McIlveen (The Minister for Regional Development): I wish to inform Members of my decision to accept the outcomes of the Public Inquiry for the £400million, A6 Londonderry to Dungiven Dualling Scheme and to proceed with the scheme, subject to the availability of funding.

The scheme involves the construction of 18.6 miles of new dual carriageway from Londonderry to Dungiven, including a dual carriageway bypass of Dungiven.

The indicative allocations for 2017/18 – 2020/21 period will fund construction of part of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme. My Department is currently considering the extent of the scheme, including a bypass of Dungiven, that could be delivered. It is envisaged that priority will be given to construction from Dungiven towards Londonderry.

This is further good news for the North West as it follows my announcement in January that work on the £130 million dual carriageway from Randalstown to Castledawson on this strategic route is expected to start later this year.

In relation to the Londonderry to Dungiven scheme, the Inspector, appointed to chair the inquiries to examine the case for and against the scheme, recommended that the proposed dual carriageway should be constructed in accordance with the published route.

In considering the Inspector's Report, my Department carried out a thorough examination of the Inspector's recommendations and concluded that the scheme should proceed with amendments.

Two partial alternative routes were presented at the Public Inquiry. These have been assessed along with one section of the route that the Inspector asked my Department to review. My Department's assessment concluded that in each case the published route should be taken forward.

Part V of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 sets out the statutory requirements for the assessment of environmental impacts of road schemes. I can confirm that an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out and I have considered the Environmental Statement and the consultation responses. It is, therefore, my view that the likely significant environmental effects have been properly assessed and have been sufficient to inform judgements on the scheme.

Accordingly, in light of the assessment undertaken and information presented within the Statement to Inform the Appropriate Assessment and the Environmental Statement, I accept my Department's conclusion (as the Competent Authority) that construction and operation of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven Dualling Scheme would not by itself, or in combination with other known plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the River Faughan and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation and River Roe and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation.

I have carefully considered my Department's Statement and agree with its conclusions. I have therefore decided to proceed with the scheme. In doing so, I commit my Department to carrying out

the necessary works to facilitate the Inspector's recommendations and the environmental design measures, as well as the mitigation measures described in the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven Departmental Statement and Environmental Statement.

As the scheme progresses towards construction I also commit my Department to review its Environmental Statement and Habitats Regulations Assessment, as necessary at the time and before making any Vesting Order.

The scheme has been structured to permit construction in parts, thus allowing potential for construction of Dungiven Bypass ahead of the remainder of the scheme.

The proposed road is a high standard dual carriageway. It has no private accesses, no central reserve crossovers, junctions are grade-separated or left-in/left-out and side roads are either stopped-up, diverted or linked to minimise the number of junctions. This standard of dual carriageway has considerable safety benefits for the road user.

I have asked my Department to publish the formal Notice of its intention to Proceed and to make the Direction Order for the scheme. The associated Stopping-Up of Private Accesses Order and the Vesting Orders will remain in draft (until indicative allocations are confirmed and a final business case is approved).

Please note the above statement is embargoed until 11.15 on 24 February 2016.